

W I N G
Rural District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

JOHN ALEX. HEDGES, M.R.C.S., &c.

FOR THE YEAR 1903.

1904.

TO THE

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

OF

WING.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

At the desire of the Local Government Board, I attempt the Annual Report for the Wing Rural District for the year 1903, a task that would have fallen to the late Dr. Sandell, who passed away on the 17th of May, 1904, having been ill from the 20th of November, 1903, myself being approved as his deputy from the latter date to Michaelmas of the present year, 1904 ; but not having been Medical Officer myself for 1903, and not being successful in getting any information from Dr. Sandell himself during his six months' illness, or being able to get the Births and Deaths Returns from him, all those documents I have had to get in duplicate from the Registrars themselves ; and further, the illness of the late Sanitary Inspector, Mr. Thomas Brown, and his death in April, 1903, rendering it impossible to get the information from him which would have been so useful, makes it less easy to give anything like an adequate report, but such as I am able to do will, I trust, under the circumstances be considered better than nothing. I am happy, however, to admit the great help I have had from the new Inspector, Mr. Gurney.

The Wing Rural District consists of eleven village parishes, widely scattered ; and according to the census of 1901, the population had sensibly declined in most of the parishes, with the one exception of Soulbury. The parish which showed the greatest declension was Ivinghoe, which gave a population of 817 in 1901 ; whereas ten years previously it was 1,270, and ten previous to that, viz. 1881, it was over 1,800, thus losing more than half its population in twenty years.

I fancy, however, that this declension has touched its lowest point, and that improvement may be reasonably expected. There is, however, a great tendency for the young men to go away from the villages and enter the towns, thus swelling the population there and diminishing that of the rural districts, with a tendency to congestion,

resulting in overcrowding, with its deplorable effect on the public health. If the towns are to over-crowd, living spaces must be insisted upon by the town authorities, and this is, I am glad to say, getting more attention than it did, showing that the air space which people leave behind them in the country must somehow, though in small measure and at great expense and difficulty, be preserved for them in the towns which they persist in filling up and overcrowding.

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS.

A cold, dry April, when nothing could grow, followed by a deluge of rain in June, and generally a cold, wet summer, made a startling contrast to the cycle of some seven or eight continuously dry seasons previously experienced, filling the springs which had become somewhat alarmingly low ; and, by the way, the season, for some cause or another, was singularly healthy, as cold wet summers and mild winters seem on the whole wonderfully conducive to the public health. The absence of flies in a cold wet summer, so different to hot dry summers, was conspicuously favourable to health, as by their tendency to feed on putrifying garbage and then possibly settling on some abrasion of surface or wound, with result of blood-poisoning, made their absence especially desirable. The comparative coldness of the summer, too, was felt in the absence of summer diarrhœa, as it is believed by modern thinkers that continued heat of summer, by entering the ground to greater depth, say a foot or more, means diarrhœa, of course.

DEATH RATE.

Taking the death-rate as a whole, as might be inferred from previous observations, it was singularly low, being only 46, including 3 deaths in the Union House, working out at 6.30 per thousand, as against 10.66 of previous year (1902) and 9.40 of year before that. Zymotic death-rate (as in 1902) simply *nil*. Deaths from Phthisis, 5, giving an average of .80, less favourable than 1902, when there were only two cases, whilst deaths in Tubercular cases (other than Phthisis) were 3, same as last year.

SICKNESS RATE.

Of course, by this is meant Zymotic sickness, as we have not (as Health Officers) any knowledge of other sickness. Seven cases (as against 22 in previous year, and 17 in year before that). Three of these cases were removed to Grove Hospital ; all Scarlet Fever, all cured. In addition to these three there was one case of Scarlet Fever at Dagnall, in a child of six years ; one case of Puerperal Septicœmia in a married woman of 30, at Wing ; a case of Typhoid at Well Trough, in Ivinghoe, in a man of 42 ; and a case of Diphtheria in a child of 12. All these were recoveries.

I see in the Report for 1902 that as many as 19 cases were admitted into Grove Hospital from the Wing Rural district. What a contrast to the year I am considering, when only three were admitted !

BIRTH RATE.

Whilst the late Medical Officer deplored the falling-off of the Birth Rate to 138 in 1902, as against 167 in the year 1901, I have but to chronicle the modest number of 87, a considerable declension indeed, and showing an average of 14·7 per annum. It seems in this district, and indeed generally all over the country, how the lowering of the Birth rate (accidentally) follows suit with the lowering of the Death rate ; the latter, of course, is the sequence of the greater public and private hygiene so marked a (beneficial) feature of this our day and generation.

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1903 and previous Years.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.		TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.				Deaths in Public Institu- tions.	Deaths of Non-Residents registered in district.	Deaths of Residents registered beyond District	DEATHS AT ALL AGES NETT.	
		Number.	Rate.*	Under 1 year of age.		At all ages.					Number	Rate.*
				Number.	Rate per 1000 Births registered.	Number.	Rate.*					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1893												
1894												
1895	7196	189	26.27			95	12.64			4	99	13.75
1896	6904	183	26.50	20	114.75	78	11.29			4	82	11.87
1897	6871	164	23.86	17	103.65	91	13.24			1	92	13.39
1898	6839	137	20.03	16	118.32	104	15.20			11	115	16.81
1899	6806	152	22.33	15	98.68	94	13.81			10	104	15.28
1900	6758	124	18.34	21	169.35	83	12.28			4	87	12.87
1901	6271	167	26.63	12	71.85	55	8.77			4	59	9.40
1902	6185	138	22.31	11	79.71	64	10.34			2	66	10.67
Averages for years 1895- 1902	6728.6	155.4	23.3	16	108.4	83	12.19			5	88—	13—
1903	6185	87	14.07	4	45.97	43	6.95			3	46	7.43

* Rates calculated per 1,000 of estimated population.

NOTE.—The deaths to be included in Column 7 of this table are the whole of those registered during the year as having actually occurred within the district or division. The deaths to be included in Column 12 are the number in Column 7, corrected by the subtraction of the number in Column 10 and the addition of the number in Column 11.

By the term "Non-residents" is meant persons brought into the district on account of illness, and dying there; and by the term "Residents" is meant persons who have been taken out of the district on account of illness, and have died elsewhere.

Total population at all ages		6271	At Census of 1901.
Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water). } 28587		Number of inhabited houses	
Average number of persons per house ...			

Vital Statistics of separate Localities in 1903 and previous years.

YEAR.			Population estimated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year.
1895	...	...	7196	189	91	
1896	...	...	6904	183	78	20
1897	...	...	6871	164	91	17
1898	...	...	6839	137	104	16
1899	...	...	6806	152	94	15
1900	...	...	6758	124	83	21
1901	...	...	6271	167	55	12
1902	...	...	6185	138	64	11
Averages of Years 1893 to 1902	}	...	6728.6	156.6	82.4	16
1903	...	...	6185	87	43	4

Causes and Ages of all Deaths during Year 1903.

			All ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.
Erysipelas	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	1	...
Phthisis	...	...	5	...	2	...	1	2	...
Other tubercular diseases	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	3	...
Cancer (malignant disease)	...	...	5	...	...	...	...	3	2
Bronchitis	...	...	2	...	1	...	...	...	1
Pneumonia	...	...	2	...	1	...	...	1	...
Alcoholism (cirrhosis of liver)	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	1	...
Premature birth	...	...	3	3	...	...	...	...	...
Heart diseases	...	...	5	...	...	1	...	2	2
Accidents	...	...	5	1	...	2	...	1	1
All other causes	...	...	17	1	1	...	...	3	12
All causes	...	...	49	5	5	3	1	17	18

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year 1903.

	At all ages.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.	65 and upwards.	No of cases removed to Hospital from each locality.
Small-pox	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cholera	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diphtheria	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...
Membranous croup	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Scarlet fever	4	...	1	3	...	...	...	3
Typhus fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Enteric fever	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Relapsing fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Continued fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerperal fever	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Plague	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	7		1	4		2		3

NOTES.—The localities adopted for this table should be the same as those in Tables II. and IV.

State the name of the isolation hospital, if any, used by the sick district. Mark (H) the locality in which it is situated, or if not within the district, state where it is situated, and in what district. Grove Hospital united with the Soulbury Locality. *Isolation Hospital, Grove. Small Pox Hospital, Leighton Buzzard.*

WING.

Following on last year's Report as made by my predecessor, I still have, as existing Medical Officer, to re-state the urgent necessity for a wholesome supply of water for the hygienic needs of the population, arrangements for which have made but little progress, the existing supply being from surface wells, which are always, and under all circumstances, dangerous, as being liable to contamination from rain, washing *debris*, &c., into the well; and further, the soaking of impurities by reason of the more or less absorbent nature of the soil down into and permeating the very springs themselves. Geologists are generally agreed now that there is what has been named an **impermeable stratum** everywhere, that is, a dense material of some kind at a greater or less depth from the surface, so that whilst filth of any and all kinds (and as people generally have not cared to possess themselves of hygienic knowledge) any amount of filth may be and indeed is allowed to percolate into and defile the water (necessarily used by the population) to the obviously great imperilment of the public health. But whilst filth may and does reach this **impermeable stratum**, it obviously **cannot get through it**; so the inference is easily arrived at that deep wells (the boring having necessarily had to go through this **impermeable stratum**) must be the only right and safe means of getting water, excepting, of course, you can tap such a lake as Loch Katrine, for Glasgow, which I believe is the purest drinking water yet obtained anywhere. But in this neighbourhood we have no Loch Katrine.

Deep wells, not necessarily (or even by reason of their great expense) for one village only, but for groups of villages adjacent to each other, are obviously the very especially right means of gaining pure drinking water for populations. Object lessons have not been wanting of late years to convince us all of the intimate connection between impure water and the outbreaks of infectious disease. The occurrence of Typhoid Fever at Maidstone, also at Worthing, was proved beyond a doubt to emanate directly from an impure water supply, the object lesson being intensified by neighbouring and closely adjacent populations (because supplied by pure water) being unaffected and retaining their health. Another lesson was given to us some ten or eleven years ago in Hamburg. Supplied as it was with an impure water, the town was drenched with Asiatic Cholera, whilst the closely-adjacent township of Altona remained perfectly healthy. Since then I learn from a private source that Hamburg itself has a new and perfect supply of pure water.

Harking back to Wing, and now referring to drainage, I may say it is partly provided for, and so far in a fairly satisfactory manner; but in the remaining portion of the parish the drainage is conspicuous by its absence, but a suitable plan for improving the drainage, or, more properly speaking, sewerage of Wing, is now before the Council and being considered by it, and will very likely take some practical form presently.

EDLESBOROUGH (PARISH).

A very moderate scheme for drainage at the hamlet of Dagnall was at length passed by the Council and sent up to the Local Government Board, with prompt rejection by that central body as being blatantly inefficient and unsuitable. Since then a dumb well has been sunk by the owner of the property with what are called "headings," and this receives the Dagnall drainage, but which is allowed to infiltrate into the chalk, a plan which no hygienist can approve, but indeed is fraught with peril to all who live on such infiltrated soil, and remembering the high-land position of Dagnall, such a treatment of the low-lands into which such filth is allowed to percolate by gravitation must be particularly unfortunate.

TASKER'S ROW (EDLESBOROUGH).

The drainage from this part still adds its pollution to the brook in Summerleys in Eaton Bray (in another parish, another district, and another county), and when the Eaton Bray District Council completes its arrangements, so imperatively (and rightly) insisted upon by the Local Government Board, for precipitating their sewage and only allowing the purified effluent to fall into the brook, how think you? Can they allow you to pour your **un**purified sewage into the brook that they have been required to cleanse? An injunction, one would think, must be served upon you to disconnect.

IVINGHOE.

The drainage from Ivinghoe, which is allowed to take its own way by accumulating near and about the Grove Farm, some of it finding its home in the brook that runs by Ivinghoe Aston, calls loudly for reform, as its existing state being insanitary and thus contributing to unhealthy results to the population of Ivinghoe Aston, remembering, too, the low-lying and generally damp condition of that hamlet.

CHEDDINGTON.

A scheme for water supply has been resolved upon and sent up to the Local Government Board, but as yet no answer has been vouchsafed by that august body. So matters are at a standstill, but not only for the health of the inhabitants, which is of first importance, but a water supply is further wanted to flush the drains to prevent blockage. The only public water supply now is the public pump, which, however, only accommodates a portion of the village.

STOKE HAMMOND.

A great improvement in the water supply of this village was effected some years ago owing to the persistency of the late Dr. Sandell in getting a well sunk in an open space, not liable to contamination, and

finished off with a public pump giving an ample supply of excellent water. The sewage, however, of this parish accumulating at and stagnating near the "Dolphin" Inn is terribly insanitary, and calls loudly for reform.

The number of nuisances reported, and summonses issued, with other sanitary matters for the year, as supplied me by your Inspector, Mr. Gurney, are as follows :—

No. of Nuisances reported ...	...	...	...	...	8
„ Notices issued ...	...	...	...	...	15
„ Infectious Diseases ...	...	...	...	...	4
„ Whooping Cough (Wing) ...	...	...	...	...	75
„ Bakehouses, etc., inspected	...	...	...	...	12
„ New Water supplies	...	...	...	...	<i>nil</i>
„ Old ones repaired ...	...	...	...	...	„
„ Breaches of Bye-laws	...	...	...	...	„
„ Summonses issued ...	...	...	...	...	„
„ Plans submitted ...	...	...	...	...	6
„ Canal Boats inspected	...	...	...	...	59

I beg to remain,

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN ALEX. HEDGES,

Medical Officer.